## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Intervie	wee: Mil	ton Quon	Interview Number: 30
Chinese	Name:		Number of Tapes: 4  Length: 2 Hours & 45 Minutes
Date of	Interview:	10/27/79, 12/1/79	
Intervie	wer:Bev	erly Chan	
Others P	resent:		
Language	: Engli	sh	
Summariz	er: Marg	ie Lew	
Contents	\$		
Time	Counter	_	
Segment	Number	Summary	Tape: 1 Side A
1&2	020-034	born in 1886 or 188 sometime before 190	father was born in 1887, his mother was 7. His father came to the United States 6. Then he returned to China to Marry. back to the United States and came to 1912.
	035-051	Both parents came in How Cattlehead I Mother learned very	rom Canton from Chuk Hom (Ngaw Loo load). Both spoke Sze Yup dialect. Little English. She did not have to days, Chinese women stayed home to
	052 <b>~</b> 066	Mother was complete Chinese newspapers pick up English qui as well as had a be speak very good Eng business. Might ha	and to write. Father was able to the well, and learned to write English sautiful Chinese hand. He also had to thish in order to carry on his produce the had some education in San Francisco also fluent in Chinese, of course.
3	067-077		because it was known as "gum saan," ortunity. Father was twenty when he States.
	078-103	Mother's brothers of One was a principal "goong" or great up in the Lung Gong As Association Lew father and other for	rere quite well educated [in China]. of a high school or college. A cole in San Francisco was very active sociation (that is, the Four Brothers Quon, Jung, and Jew). His grand- mily members in that generation were class they were professional people.
4	104-114		the produce business when he came to and he also helped start MQ's Uncle Kit

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	104-114 115-123	in produce business a few years later.  MQ was born in 1913 on East 10th Place. They moved several times but MQ remembers 722 East 9th Street as his "growing up" place. Lived there until he married in 1944.
	124-131	MQ was the oldest of eight children. He had seven sisters. He helped his father in the produce business when he was nine or ten years old. Went to Ninth Street School.
5	132 <b>-</b> 173	The produce market was located on San Pedro Street. They worked very long hours. It was not unionized at that time. Father went to work in the middle of the night (12 or one o'clock). Sold produce until noon the next day. MQ started work around six or seven o'clock on Saturdays, until 10 a.m when the last customers left. Clean-up would take a couple more hours. Father went home to rest for a few hours, and at 4 p.m. he would go back to receive new produce from Central Market.  MQ sorted out produce soft fruit and tomatoes sold for ten cents a basket. Was fun for a kid. Father went home for a few more hours rest, then came back to work at midnight. Was a hard, tough life. Not much time for family life. MQ did not get to know his father very well. However, he got to go with his father to Chinatown every Sunday on the street car to visit relatives [this was at the Plaza, which was Old Chinatown then], buy goodies, ate "chaang gnow."  Father's business was called the "George Quon Produce."
	T/4-T0T	It was located on 937 South San Pedro Street. Mother stayed home and cooked for the family, and hardly went to the market.
6	182-213	Father left the produce business in 1936 he was losing money, went into debt. Sold the business and became a cook for a private family in Hollywood. He passed away in 1938 he died of quinsy, something to do with the throat. MQ was going to art school at the time. Sisters worked to support the family insisted that MQ should continue his education. The whole family worked together to earn extra money hulling strawberries at home for five or ten cents a basket.
7&8	214-277	Growing up years at 722 East Ninth Place. Children around the area were mostly Chinese, there were some Japanese. They spoke Chinese at home, because mother spoke only Chinese. Went to Chinese school Chung Wah, from

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		Tape: 1 Side A
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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7&8.	214-277	4 p.m. to 6 p.m., after English school. Continued to go even when MQ was in high school, although he had lost interest in it by that time. Played basketball at the

Classics.

278-308 Elementary school was well integrated -- Chinese, Japanese,
Negros (now called blacks), Mexicans, and Caucasians.
Ninth Street School, Lafayette Junior High, Polytechnic
High.

playground in Tenth Street and Wall Street. Initially, was much more interested in Chinese school, especially in writing, which gave MQ a chance to use his artistic abilities. There were about 35 in each class. MQ

enjoyed the stories the teachers related from the Chinese

MQ had no problems socially with the other races in elementary school. All the kids got along well. Had some minor fights, but MQ does not remember what color he was fighting with. There was probably some name calling, "Ching, Ching, Chinaman," but it was not meant to be abusive -- just kid stuff.

350-420

421-463

1.0

11

Not much time for leisure in those days. Chinese school came right after regular school. There was time for playing, either in the street with the neighborhood children, and also football in Chinese school with teams from other Chinese schools. Played at a playground east of Alameda Street, close to a horse stable.

Entered elementary school in 1918, graduated from high school in 1932. Then he went to Los Angeles Junior College, also to Frank Wiggins Trade School. Graduated from the junior college in 1936 in art. Mother wanted MQ to be either an aeronautical engineer or an architect. MQ's mother always had high hopes for her children. However, after some time spent in studying engineering and architecture to please his mother, MQ decided he really wanted to pursue the study of art. An uncle helped persuade MQ's mother to let him study art instead. After graduation from the Los Angeles Junior College, MQ received a scholarship to Chouinard Art School.

MQ enjoyed drawing pictures. When studying architecture, he preferred drawing or sketching the houses to making the house plans. His son, Michael, likes to draw pictures, ever since he was small. MQ went to work for Disney, with the help of the business manager at Chouinard

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11	421-463	who had followed his progress in art school. MQ had very little problems getting jobs he worked for the aircraft factory, Douglas Aircraft, during the War, in the art department. After the War, he worked with an advertising agency.
•	464-END	MQ got married in 1944, and moved to the Echo Park area. Parents owned the house on East Ninth Place.
END OF	SIDE A	
		TAPE 1 SIDE B
1.	010-024	MQ's parents purchased the house on East Ninth Place for a few thousand dollars, under \$7,000. Chinese usually liked to pay in cash, so it was possible that they paid cash. Mother was one of the first Chinese "women libbers." She was not aggressive, but was certainly not a wallflower. She suggested to MQ's father that he should invest in property. They bought a house in Cranton Street, with two units, and rented them out which helped with the income. MQ and his sisters helped by turning their incomes in to the family.
2	025-040	Their house had three bedrooms. Parents were in one, MQ had his own room for a while. When the sisters started arriving so close together (seven total), for a while MQ had to share bedrooms with his parents. The children did not mind the crowded quarters — they were not very demanding children.  The children spoke mostly English at home, except when they spoke to their mother. She wanted the children
		to use their Chinese more. In fact, all through their lives, MQ's mother did not want her children to forget anything Chinese.
3	053-068	They celebrated all the Chinese holidays watched the Dragon Dance, the Lion Dance, every year. Received "lay see," which all the kids looked forward to.
	069-072	The whole family wore American style clothes. Mother made many of MQ's shirts and his sisters' dresses in order to save money.
4	073-117	MQ cannot recall going to a Chinese style wedding, but remembers several funerals where all the Chinese traditions

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4	073-117	were observed. All the Ch buried in the Chinese ceme be buried there, or more b be buried in Caucasian cem was established a long tim It is located on the easts Evergreen area.	tery because they were no ecause they were no eteries. The Chine before MQ's fathe	wanted to ot allowed to ese cemetery er's time.
	118-END	MQ went to the Chinese Con Street, five doors down fr standing. Mother converte who also taught her Englis MQ's sister has her first	om their house which d to Christianity h h. MQ was named by	ch is still by Mrs. Finley
END OF	TAPE 1			
		TAPE 2 SI	DE A	
1	020-027	MQ was always conscious of skin color. He did not wa always felt Chinese.		
2	028-052	MQ's leisure time was spen and later on, he played to Tennis Club was formed in first members. Used to pl Los Angeles city teams. He card games. He was expose visited his uncle in San'F stand too much of it on liked Western music. Did time, especially when he we worked on Saturdays for a After art school, he joine	nnis for many years 1938, and MQ was or ay against San France did not enjoy maked to Chinese opera rancisco. He did really have too as going to art school long time.	s. Chinese ne of the ncisco and njong or when he not under- s. MQ o much spare nool. He
		when he learned how to dan was the president of the A join any family association	ce. In junior coll rt Honor Society.	lege, he
3	065-073	MQ does not remember if hi associations, but he was n		

074-077

26 years old then.

Yet he took MQ to Chinatown every Sunday to visit friends or MQ's uncle's store. Mother did not go along. In those days, women were always in the background -- they

Father never owned a car. The first car in the family was when MQ bought one after art school -- he was almost

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
3	078-089	In 1939 MQ went to Lake Tahoe for a Chinese Christian Conference there were a lot of Chinese there. MQ met his wife, Peggy Wong from Stockton, there. They did not marry for five years. Meanwhile, there was a lot of social life down here in Los Angeles, and in Stockton for Peggy.
	090-102	MQ dated all Chinese girls. He does not know whether his parents had a matched marriage, but MQ picked a pretty one.
4	103-114	Even in the 1930's and 1940's, the Chinese men born in the United States still went back to China to find wives, although the practice was not as prevalent as in the earlier period.
	115-139	China born Chinese seemed to look down on American born Chinese. The American born Chinese did not know the Chinese culture as well as they did, and probably because they thought the American culture was not as good as theirs. During MQ's early school years, not many China born students, but when he was in college, there were quite a few. MQ got along with them, but not real close friends.
5	140-163	MQ had Jewish classmates and neighbors. Got along well with them they were more fun and very friendly. The Chinese and Jewish people both have sharp business sense, they know how to make money.
	164-199	MQ felt there was a lot of hostility in Los Angeles from the Caucasians against the Chinese. He had trouble when he inquired about a lot or when buying a house. The owners were willing to sell, but the neighbors objected — that was in 1952 or 1953. When the realtors discovered MQ was Chinese (over the phone), they would not sell.
7	200-242	There was a lot of hostility until the blacks began to make a stand for their civil rights. Then the Chinese were considered the "lesser of the two evils," and were more readily accepted.
	243-259	At one time, MQ felt that his children should only marry within the Chinese race, but this does not bother him anymore.
	260-274	MQ did not actually insist that his children follow certain professions. However, he encouraged the oldest son to be a doctor or dentist. But he did not care for it after

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
7	260-274	trying, so he turned to art, and is now very successful in New York. MQ's second son is in Pharmacy, the third son is in Dentistry without encouragement on the parents' part. MQ's daughter is a teacher.
8	275-284	Friends and relatives have almost the same situation in regard to what their children should study. Seems that most who finish college end up with pretty good jobs.
	285-311	During high school and college, MQ was not too interested in mixing with white kids probably due to his heritage, or because his mother's prodding of his Chinese ancestry. However, MQ's oldest son is very interested in being among whites.
9	312-352	Because of the great amount of prejudice against the Chinese, a person could not help but feel inferior deep
		down. They could not go to certain restaurants or dance places. They were always made to feel that they were not wanted.
10	353-384	Mother made various kinds of medicine for her children from Chinese herbs, teas, bitter stuff. MQ did not use any for his own children. MQ's own family believes more in Western medicine.
	385-404	Before World War II, prominent Chinese in the community were Y. C. Hong, an attorney; Albert Quon, an exporter and importer; Peter Soo Hoo.
	405-439	MQ was very active in the Chinese Tennis Club. He played in tournaments. They played at the Downey Playground every Sunday. It had fifteen to twenty members several women members who played very well.
11	440-END	Prominent Chinese families before World War II included the Soo Hoo family, the Leung family on West Pico (the father was a herbalist), and the Tom family (herbalist).
END OF	TAPE 2	radice was a needaction, and one for ranking (needaction).
		· ·
	•	TAPE 3 SIDE A
1&2	022-048	MQ lived in a duplex at 8th and Gramercy in 1946. The white neighbors there were very cool towards MQ's family. They were more cool than rude, until they got to know MQ and his family, at which time they became good friends.

At no other place did MQ's family encounter resistance of any great significance. The only other time was when

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
1&2	022-048	MQ called the real estate broker about buying a home in the western area of town. He was rather rude in telling MQ that they "do not sell to Chinese." Later MQ moved to areas with scattered Asian families with no further problems (around 1955).
3	049-084	In MQ's opinion, real estate brokers refused to sell to Orientals, because their clients did not want to cause trouble with their white neighbors by being the first to sell to Orientals.
4&5	085-169	During the pre-War years, Chinese occupations included a few engineers, dentists, grocery store owners, many in the produce business. MQ's father sold his produce business and became a cook, and was a good cook. He worked for William Dieterle, a noted Hollywood director. MQ's father would come home on weekends and holidays. Many Chinese were cooks in restaurants as well as in wealthy homes. Younger generation began going into professions medicine, architecture. Many Chinese also were waiters, waitresses, busboys.
6&7	170-239 240-279	The Chinese Tennis Club was made up of people in all professions and trades, mostly Chinese. One was half Chinese, half white. Rather unusual for interracial marriages in the early 20th century, but there were a few, mostly Chinese men to white women. No special treatment to the offspring of these marriages, in fact, as far as the Tennis Club was concerned, this did not faze the members at all. However, it seemed that the offsprings of interracial marriages associated mostly with Chinese, and were fully accepted by them at least from MQ's observation.  The average job income before the War MQ's job with
		Disney was \$18 per week, then later became \$25. At Douglas, in the beginning of the War, MQ's salary was \$0.85 an hour (March, 1942), or \$34 per week. \$50 a week was considered very good.
8	280-287	Most Chinese were able to save money, even if they did not make much, they seemed to have a naturally thrifty attitude.
9	288-330	In the early 1940's, houses cost \$10,000 plus. In the 1930's a dentist filling cost three or four dollars.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
9	331-354	In 1939, MQ bought his first car for \$500. It was a four-door Plymouth.
10	355-384	In 1944, working at Douglas, MQ tried to buy car insurance. The agent from Farmer's Insurance Company refused to sell MQ insurance policy because he was Chinese. MQ did not feel good about that, but in those days, the Chinese just accepted these discriminations, and did not do much about it, or could not do much about it. Chinese were not very vocal in those days.
	385-409	No recourse.
	410-END	When the War ended, there was less discrimination, but before, there was a lot of prejudice. However, it seemed that the higher class places the better res-
		taurants, barber shops, etc were less discriminatory than the middle or lower class places. Of course there were many places MQ did not go, for fear of being rejected.
END OF	SIDE A	mode many particular in your go, and according adjustment
		TAPE 3 SIDE B
1	014-029	A group of MQ and his friends were turned away from the Palomar, a dance place. From there they went to the Wilshire Bowl. They were always able to rent halls for their dances. The Chinese Tennis Club held dances every year.
2 .	030-034	MQ does not recall much about politics in those years in 1930's and 1940's as far as Chinese involvement was
	035-049	concerned.  Most Chinese lived near other Chinese in Chinatown, or near 10th and San Pedro, or further down at Adams Boulevard.
	050-059	After World War II, Chinese began moving westward in Los Angeles. They needed to expand due to growing numbers. During the War, there were about seven thousand Chinese in Los Angeles.
3	060-094	A few Chinese families were already living away from Chinatown in the early 1920's, probably because they were better off financially and wanted to be pioneers in this respect.
4	095-116	When the other ethnic groups moved into Chinatown, the Chinese did not move out, at least not as a mass movement.

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
4	117-142	Many Chinese families in the United States sent money back to their relatives in China. MQ's mother sent money to her brother, nephews, or other relatives. In those days a dollar went a long way in China. MQ's mother did this for many years. MQ does not send money, he has no close contacts there.
5	143-157 158-168	During the Depression in Los Angeles, MQ was a teenager and really did not realize there was a Depression going on. His family was in very modest means, anyway, so he did not know what was going on.  In 1936 to 1937, three years after the Depression, MQ's
		father had to sell his produce business. He had accumu- lated some debts, possibly due to the Depression. MQ's mother was a good manager, and with MQ's modest income, and that of two of his sisters, they were able to pay off their debts, even after his father's death. Took several years, but they managed to pay their creditors.
6	169-199	Family agreed that MQ should continute his studies at the art school, so two sisters went to work, and he took part time jobs to help support the family. These two sisters went as far as high school. The other sisters were able to go to college, partly supported by the "family fund," to which everyone contributed. In MQ's opinion, the Chinese in Los Angeles have done
END OF	TAPE 3	better, or at least average, compared to the general population in terms of financial achievement.
		TAPE 4 SIDE A
1	010-020	Most American born Chinese, like MQ, would prefer to have sons, especially the first born. However, MQ thinks other nationalities feel the same way, particularly the Jewish people. Anyway, this idea was passed on to MQ's generation by their parents. After having his first son, he would perhaps liked to have another son. But after the third son, he definitely wanted a daughter. Other people of MQ's generation felt almost the same way he did. Some had daughters and no sons but MQ felt that

they were just as happy, although they seldom expressed those thoughts aloud. Sons do carry on the family name,

that is probably the reason for the preference.

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Segment	Number	Summary			
.2	021-045	MQ wanted his children to have som they sent the children to Chinese years or so. When the children reage, they no longer attended. MQ' away from the school and the kids they still speak Chinese at home show to speak the language. It is cisco Chinatown. Because the concwas in a more limited space, all thow to speak fluently.	school for a couple of ached junior high school s family moved further lost interest. However, o the kids will not forge different in San Franentration of Chinese		
3	046-090	Most of the Chinese who were not b States did not express a desire to Only the more elderly people wante	return to China.		
4	091-116	MQ did not mind to much going to C kids disliked it because it cut in especially on Saturday mornings.			
5	117-140	Movies that had Chinese characters Chinese in a derogatory manner Chan are prime examples. The Chin in those days they more or less they did not really like the portr	Fu Manchu and Charlie ese did not protest accepted them although ayals.		
	141-160	In MQ's professional life, he has discrimination.	never felt much		
6 .	161-185	MQ feels he is a bit above average [commercial] artist. There are no this field. Not too many that are Only Jake Lee, Tyrus Wong, Dong Ki	t too many Chinese in prominent at present.		
7	186-240	Michael, is doing quite well as an satisfied with his own work right have done better.	artist. MQ is quite		
	241-256	MQ did not join any other social c tennis club.	lubs aside from the		
	257-259	MQ joined the Chinese Congregation deacon.	al Church. He was a		
	260-270	The family was MQ's greatest inter He is not a "joiner," so he does n friends. Beside the Tennis Club, the "Young Marrieds" group. MQ al	ot have many close MQ and his wife joined		

Scouts as an adult member.

271-320

 $\mbox{MQ}$  does not go to Chinatown too often now, but during his growing up years,  $\mbox{MQ}\mbox{'s}$  father took him every Sunday to

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Time Segment	Counter Number	Summary
8	271-320	visit and buy groceries. Now MQ's family goes just to eat and shop on occasion.
9	321-350	MQ's contacts with Caucasians at work have made him more Americanized, but he is always conscious of being Chinese, and is proud to be Chinese. MQ's oldest boy is outgoing, has a good personality, and wants to be more Caucasian than Chinese. He has dated other races. At first, MQ did not like it but he has learned to accept it, both MQ and his wife.
10	351-400	Even if MQ's son married out of the race, MQ would not mind too much, but of course MQ would prefer that his son stayed within the race. MQ would be somewhat dismayed if his children married a black person, mostly because the two cultures are so different. "But if that ever happened in my family, I guess I would just have to roll with it."
11	401-460	With his family and relatives, MQ is 100 percent Chinese. With his professional life, he thinks he is about 50 percent Chinese and 50 percent American.
END OF	SIDE A	
		TAPE 4 SIDE B
	010-016	In MQ's art designs, his Chinese heritage creeps in quite often. He never forgets that he is Chinese. So, in his professional lifehe feels at least 50-50, but more often it is 75% Chinese. Or sometimes it is the other way around.
2	017-050	MQ thinks he works harder, or sometimes he works over- time, because he is Chinese. He feels that he is pretty well accepted by non-Chinese.
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END OF INTERVIEW

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